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## THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES OF THE PRE-SERVICE ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHER EDUCATION PROGRAM: THE KNOWLEDGE BASE AND CURRICULUM

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### ABSTRACT

This short contribution is a brief theoretical perspective of English Language Teacher Education (ELTE) from the existing theories started from 1985 to 2014. It reviews the theories of English language teacher education around the globe and in Indonesia. The main focus of this article is concerned with the knowledge base and the curriculum viewed from various perspectives. To link the theories of English language teacher education in Indonesia with the needs of school context, an overview of the existing curriculum at secondary level adds further description.

**Keywords:** *English Language Teacher Education (ELTE), Knowledge Base, Curriculum.*

### INTRODUCTION

English Language Teacher Education Program (ELTE) has been a pivotal issue to be explored particularly in relation to the knowledge base and the curriculum. The knowledge base of teaching and how it relates to the content and practice of teacher education becomes the main aspect that should be considered when designing the curriculum. This article reviews and discusses various perspectives of the knowledge base and curriculum from several experts. To provide deeper insights into the curriculum, the examples of the core features of initial teacher education curriculum will then be portrayed.

#### English Language Teacher Education (ELTE)

It has been observed that language teacher education programs have a big responsibility to prepare student teachers for their professional work, and to educate them how they learn to teach languages (see Johnson, 2009; Freeman,

2002). Such programs should equip the student teachers with the attitudes, skills, behaviour, relevant and up to date knowledge, and competencies to be good teachers (Sidhu, Fook, Kaur, 2011,p.4) so that they can perform their tasks effectively in the classrooms and schools.

Furthermore, the programs should prepare language teachers to become proficient users of the target language, in this case, English language. They should also possess kinds of knowledge such as knowledge about the language, knowledge about effective learning activities and knowledge about assessment. Meanwhile, Wright & Bolitho (1993) mention that English teachers should function as 1) proficient and competent users who have the ability to speak and write English, 2) skilled analyst who possess knowledge of English from an analytical perspectives i.e. phonology, grammar, syntax, lexical properties, generic structures and literacy conventions, and 3) teachers who are able to teach and deliver the knowledge to the students in the classroom. This is

supported by Sidhu, Fook, Kaur (2011) who state that based on the international standards practices, student teachers are required to possess knowledge and skills in their specialist subjects to enable them to teach the subjects confidently and accurately.

In Indonesian context, ELTE aims to prepare student teachers to become professional English teachers. However, there has not been any national standard to regulate and organize the English teacher education programs throughout Indonesia. Each program in each institution has their own regulations, and consequently the aims/learning outcomes, the teaching learning process and the evaluation differ among ELTEs. Thus, there has not been any curriculum standard and guideline of what should be incorporated into the curriculum of ELTE which is nationally designed. Therefore the curriculum varied among many ELTEs and they develop their own curricula based on the examples of the reputable ELTE programs in Indonesia and is added by their local needs. For example, the ELTE curriculum of the research site previously adopted the curriculum of one reputable university (ELTE) in West Java. The research site used the university's curriculum and then developed it by adding the other components of curriculum needed by and adjusted to the conditions and situation of the research site. Thus, this shows that national standard curriculum is pivotal to be designed to guide all ELTEs in Indonesia in producing such qualified and professional teachers.

Regardless the above situation of ELTE and referring to the government Act No 14/2005 concerning teachers and teacher educators, the teachers should possess four competences, i.e. pedagogic (teaching skills), personality, social, and professional (mastery of English language) competences. Thus, the ELTE program should prepare and educate

student teachers to possess the four competences. The present condition of (English) teachers in Indonesia particularly in English teachers' teachings is in low standards (Suherdi, 2012). Suherdi (2012) also asserts that their "mastery of the four competences are mostly in low standards", particularly in professional and personality competences which, to a great extent, seem to contribute to low quality of their pedagogic competence. Low capability in English, combined with low level of patience, persistence and care have resulted in careless teaching endeavours" (p.239). Therefore, to achieve the high standard of teachers' quality in order to possess the four competencies, the curriculum of English language teacher education program should in such a way develop student teachers' primacy language competence and the ability to teach effectively as well as to educate them for the empowerment (Suherdi, 2012).

Thus, to produce such English teachers, the ELTE programs should be designed in such a way that it could accommodate all the aspects pertinent to producing professional English teachers. In designing such programs, the prominent issue that always emerges is on what "constitutes the knowledge base of teaching and how it relates to the content and practice of teacher education" (Tedick, 2005, p.1). This is supported by Richards (2008) who contends that Second Language Teacher Education (SLTE) is affected by two factors, i.e. 1) a rethinking of its knowledge base and 2) instructional practices as a response to changes of the nature of SLTE and the need for competent language teachers around the globe.

Regarding the knowledge base as highlighted by Richards, it can be defined as the entire repertoires of skills, information, attitudes, etc. that teachers need to carry out their classroom

responsibility (Rahimim, 2008; Valli & Tom, 1985). Whereas Johnson (2009, p.21) puts forth that knowledge base is a professional self-definition which “reflects a widely conception of what people need to know and are able to do to carry out the work of a particular profession”.

### The Knowledge Base and Curriculum of ELTE

The knowledge base, as Graves (2009, p. 115) defines, concerns with “what effective language teaching involves/what teachers know and are able to do to teach language effectively”. The relation of the knowledge base and curriculum of English language teacher education (ELTE) program is that “all the aspects of curriculum make up the knowledge base.” (Graves, 2009, p.116) Meanwhile, the curriculum of ELTE is “an interdependent, situated set of educational processes and tools whose aim is teacher learning”. In the design of the curriculum, “content and coherence” and “scope and sequence” should be put into account (Graves, 2009, p.115; Darling-Hammond, et al. ,2005, p.390). A coherent curriculum is not “a group of courses or activities that aggregate in the teacher-learner. Rather it is about “how teacher-learners are taught must be congruent with how they learn” (Graves, 2009, p.120).

The curriculum in language teacher education focuses on the sorts of courses that make up an educational program for teachers. In other words, the curriculum deals with the knowledge base of teaching that underlies teacher education and the sorts of instructional practices. The following is the summary of the different views of the knowledge base put forward by several experts.

**Table 1. The Perspectives of Knowledge Base**

Experts	Knowledge base of SLTE
Day & Concklin (1992)	<b>Content knowledge</b> Pedagogic knowledge <b>Pedagogic content knowledge</b> Support knowledge
Shulman (1987)	✓ <b>Content knowledge</b> ✓ General pedagogical knowledge ✓ Curriculum knowledge ✓ <b>Pedagogical content knowledge</b> ✓ Knowledge of learners and their characteristics ✓ Knowledge of educational context
Roberts (1998)	✓ <b>Content knowledge</b> ✓ <b>Pedagogical content knowledge</b> ✓ General pedagogical knowledge ✓ Curricular knowledge ✓ Contextual knowledge ✓ Process knowledge
Graves (2009)	✓ Knowledge about content ✓ Knowledge about pedagogy
Johnson (2009)	✓ <b>Content</b> the content of L2 teacher education programs: <i>what L2 teacher needs to know</i> , ✓ <b>Pedagogies</b> that are taught in L2 teacher education programs; <i>how L2 teachers should teach</i> ; ✓ Institutional forms of delivery through which both the content and pedagogies are learned; <i>how L2 teachers learn to teach</i> .
Richards (1998)	✓ Theories of teaching ✓ <b>Teaching skills</b> ✓ Communication skills ✓ <b>Subject matter knowledge</b> ✓ Pedagogical reasoning and decision making ✓ Contextual knowledge

From the above table, the knowledge base comprises 1) Content knowledge; knowledge of the subject matter, e.g. English language, 2) (General) Pedagogic knowledge: strategies, beliefs, classroom management, motivation, decision making, 3) Pedagogic content knowledge; how teachers teach ESL/EFL reading, writing, grammar, TESOL methods, materials and curriculum development, and 4) Support knowledge: linguistics, second language acquisition, research methods, etc (Day & Concklin, 1992). Meanwhile, Shulman (1987) defines seven domains of teachers' knowledge as described below.

- Content knowledge, or understanding of the subject matter.
- General pedagogical knowledge, with special reference to those broad principles and strategies of classroom management and organization, that appears to transcend subject matter.
- Curriculum knowledge, with particular grasp of the materials and programs that serve as "tools of the trade" for teachers.
- Pedagogical content knowledge, that special amalgam of content and pedagogy that is uniquely the province of teachers, their own special form of professional understanding.
- Knowledge of learners and their characteristics.
- Knowledge of educational contexts, ranging from the working of the group or classroom, the governance and financing of school districts, to the characters of communities and cultures.
- Knowledge of educational ends, purposes, and values, and their philosophical and historical grounds.

What Shulman proposes comprise more detail components than those of Day & Concklin (1992). However, common components of the knowledge base exist particularly in the aspects of content, general pedagogic, and pedagogical content knowledge. The other expert, Roberts (1998), puts forward similar ideas as Shulman's except for the aspect of process knowledge.

Different views of the knowledge base are also contented by Graves (2009), Johnson (2009, p. 21), Graves ((2009) categorises it into two; 1) knowledge about content comprising knowledge about language, learning theories, target culture and expanded beyond linguistic and cultural knowledge to include a variety of subject areas such as discourse analysis, SLA, language testing, and 2) knowledge about pedagogy; how teachers use skills of teaching. On the other hand, Johnson (2009, p. 21) proposes it into three areas: " 1) the content of L2 teacher education programs: *what L2 teacher needs to know*, 2) the pedagogies that are taught in L2 teacher education programs; *how L2 teachers should teach*; 3) the institutional forms of delivery through which both the content and pedagogies are learned; *how L2 teachers learn to teach*." Apart from the knowledge of subject content, pedagogic content and professional/educational studies. In short, the knowledge base commonly incorporated into the curriculum of ELTE covers the knowledge of content, general pedagogy, pedagogical content, curricular, learner characteristics, support knowledge, educational studies.

Having reviewed the knowledge base of the ELTE, the example of the curriculum of initial or pre-service teacher education from Wedell (2014) is presented. He portrays the core features of the curriculum of TESOL initial teacher education in the table below.

**Table 2. Core Features of a TESOL ITE Curriculum**

Knowledge about		Ability to	
The (English) Language System	The Language learning Process	USE the language	TEACH the language
The Curriculum and the classroom		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>General Oral/Aural Reading skills development based around topics in L2 culture</li> </ul>	Applying knowledge of language, learning, principles of agreed teaching approach, and suggested techniques
Teaching methodology		Oral/Written Language of English Teaching	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Applying materials evaluation and adaptation principles,</li> </ul>
Materials Evaluation and adaptation		Language of ELT Reading based	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Applying principles of assessment design</li> </ul>
Language Assessment			

The curriculum of TESOL initial teacher education is divided into two main components; “the knowledge about” and “the ability to” (Wedell, 2014). The “knowledge about” encompasses the English language system, the language learning process, the curriculum and the classroom, teaching methodology, materials evaluation and adaptation, and language assessment. The English language system concerns with the knowledge about what language is, what ‘communicative competence’ involves and adequate English language proficiency. This aspect is referred to as content knowledge. The language learning process describes the knowledge about language learning processes and how these vary according to the age of learners. The curriculum and the classroom cover an understanding of what the two previously mentioned knowledge implies to be stated in the curriculum and implemented in the classroom.

The teaching methodology refers to a range of techniques for teaching different aspects of language forms and skills required by the curriculum. Materials evaluation and adaptation deals with an understanding of how to evaluate

learning materials and techniques for adapting them to their own context in ways that support the achievement of curriculum outcomes. Language assessment is an understanding about methods of assessment.

Regarding the “ability to”, Wedell (2014) classifies it into “use the language” and “teach the language”. In other words, the curriculum should provide opportunities for student teachers to use the language as well as to teach it. This “teach the language” such as applying knowledge of language, learning principles, teaching approaches, etc, are manifested in the curriculum component that is “teaching practicum/practice”. Thus from Wedell’s points of view, the core features of TESOL ITE curriculum consist of the knowledge about the theoretical components and the ability to reflects the capability to implement the knowledge in classroom practices such as how to use the language during teaching learning process and how to teach the language to their students.

On the other perspectives, a framework for curriculum planning for LTE focusses on (1) who will be taught, (2) what will be taught, (3) how it will be

taught, and (4) how what is learned will be evaluated (Graves, 2009). The first two (number 1 and 2) concern with goals of the program and the second two (number 3 and 4) are the instructional practices through which teachers learn the content (Richards, 1988). Thus, what Graves (2009) and Richards (1988) propose concerning the curriculum of LTE is in line with what Wedell (2014) suggests that the curriculum components should cover the content/knowledge about/goals of the program, and instructional practices or ability to use and teach the language.

The examples of what constitute the course structures/components of the LTE curriculum in several countries summarized from Barahona (2010) are provided in the following table.

**Table 3. The Curriculum Components of Several Countries**

Curriculum Components	Countries	Indonesia
Educational psychology	Europea, Chile	-
Research methodology	Europea	Present
Language proficiency	Europea, Chile, Vietname	Present
Theories of teaching/ Teaching skills	Australia, Vietname, Chile	Present
Content/subject matter / Grammar courses	-Chile, Jordan, Vietname, Europea	Present
Applied linguistics	Europea	-
Pedagogical/General pedagogical/Language teaching methodology (communicative approach to	Chile, Jordan, Europea	Present

language teaching & Learner-Centred approach)		
The use of ICT	Europea	Present
Assessment	Europea	Present
Intercultural understanding	Europea	Present
Communication skills	Vietname	-
Contextual knowledge	Australia	-
Foundational knowledge of philosophy and education.	Chile	Present
History, literature, culture of the target community	Europea, Chile	Present
Teaching citizenship, moral education, political education	Europea	Present
Comparative linguistics, sociolinguistics, psycholinguistics	Europea	Present
Practical training in schools. The lengths vary (16 weeks). Micro-teaching sessions are included.	Europea, Chile, Jordan	Present
Pedagogical reasoning and decision making,	Australian	-
Linguistics	Chile	Present
Reflection seminars and methodology classes	Chile	-
Curricular knowledge	Chile	Present
Knowledge of the learner	Chile	Present
Knowledge of educational goals	Chile	Present

The above table outlines the curriculum components of several countries such as Europea, Chile, Jordan, Australia, Vietnam and Indonesia which cover content/subject matter knowledge, language proficiency, theories of teaching/ teaching skills, pedagogical/ general/pedagogical/language teaching methodology (communicative approach to language teaching & learner-centred approach), whereas pedagogical reasoning and decision making, and contextual knowledge are only found in Australia. In countries where English is their first or native language, contextual knowledge, and pedagogical reasoning and decision making constitute the major components to be studied (Australia). Meanwhile in the countries where English is as a foreign or second language (Vietnam, Chile, Jordan, and Indonesia) subject matter/content knowledge and communication skills/proficiency are the major components of the curriculum. This is due to the requirement of English teachers who should be competent in the English language both oral and written skills. Regarding language methodology, theories of teaching and teaching skills (well known as the pedagogical knowledge) are also the other major components for all countries. The practical training is also incorporated as one component of the curriculum in Europea, Chile, Jordan and Indonesia.

In line with Indonesian context, the curriculum of ELTE should refer to the curriculum of higher education. Based on the Decree of the Minister of National Education No. 232/U/2000, the curriculum of higher education comprises core curriculum and institutional curriculum. The core curriculum constitutes the characteristics of the main competence which becomes the basis to attain graduate competence as well as the minimum guidelines for the implementation of each department of faculty. This core curriculum is

determined by university/institution, profession association and stakeholders (the Decree of the Minister of National Education No.045/U/2002). Each curriculum in higher education should include the following three (3) compulsory subjects as the components of core curriculum; religion, Pancasila, and Indonesian language (the Decree of the Minister of National Education No.232/U/2000).

The overall study load of the main competence is 40% – 80%. Whereas the institutional competence describes the supported and other competencies related to the main competence in a department, and is decided by its institution. The supported competence is between 20% - 40% out of the whole study load. Whereas the other competencies is between 0%-30%. The curriculum is developed and determined by each institution/university referring to the National Education Standard (Government Rules no 19/2005 Jo Government Rules no 32/2013).

Having portrayed the curriculum of ELTE in general and in Indonesian context, it is important to outline the English curriculum of senior high schools because the content knowledge they study in ELTE program should be relevant with what is learned at schools, and the pedagogical content knowledge they gain should be adjusted to the current issues adopted at schools. In addition, the presentation of the curriculum of senior high schools is deemed necessary to examine and analyse the connection between the curriculum of LTE and the curriculum of senior high schools. Thus, the section to follow is the description of the English curriculum of senior high schools.

### **English Curriculum at Indonesian Senior High School Level**

In Indonesian schools, English is taught from elementary (as local content) to secondary education. In the secondary

level, English is learned as a compulsory foreign language subject throughout Indonesia (Emilia, 2005). Indonesian English education currently adopts a competency based curriculum (2013 curriculum) which is the reformation of 2006 curriculum. There are not too many differences between 2006 and 2013 curriculum except on the learning approaches, the reduction of the subjects, and the addition of lesson hours. These differences result in the changes of graduate competence standard, content standard (core competence and basic competence), process standard, and assessment standard.

The content standard becomes the basis to determine the competency level that should be attained by the students and the scope of the materials that should be taught (the Rules of the Ministry of Education and Culture No 64 2013). Based on the content standard the students are expected to understand and able to use expressions in the texts based on the communicative aims and master the language features used in the expressions and able to use in the real communication contexts. It means that student teachers should be prepared to acquaint with what should be taught at schools. In other words, the English knowledge learned at campus should be aligned with the kinds of English learned by students at schools.

It is obvious from the basic competence of 2013 curriculum that the focus of English teaching is still on developing various types of text. The text types taught at senior high school covers discussion, descriptive, procedure, narrative, report, recount, and exposition texts (Emilia, 2011).

## CONCLUSION

The knowledge base that commonly incorporated into the curriculum of ELTE covers the knowledge of content, general pedagogy, pedagogical content, curricular, learner characteristics, support

knowledge, educational studies and teaching practice/practicum. In Indonesian context, this knowledge base has already been incorporated into the curriculum of ELTE. Nevertheless, there has not been any standard yet to equalize the components of the curriculum in different ELTE programs. Further consideration that should be included when designing the ELTE curriculum is the relevancy with the school needs.

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